



## OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

September 25, 2015

**STAFF REPORT:** Groundwater Legislation  
**STAFF:** Doug Rischbieter, Senior Environmental Scientist  
**SUBJECT:** 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

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### Summary

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) was landmark legislation that is bringing about one of the most sweeping reforms of California water law in a century. Park managers need to prepare for the possibility that this law, and the reform of groundwater management that it will bring about, can help protect unit resources.

### Discussion

This important new law and the groundwater regulation (Groundwater Sustainability Plans), as well as the implementation of the SGMA timeline, would be relevant to the OHMVR Division and other State Park units if:

- there are wells in or near the park unit that cause impacts to local water supplies and aquatic resources (including surface water impacts such as the drying-up of streams) or,
- the park unit is within the boundaries of a designated Groundwater Basin, as defined by Department of Water Resources (DWR) Bulletin 118. (See [www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/bulletin118/index.cfm](http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/bulletin118/index.cfm))

Currently, there is an opportunity to provide input to DWR because the “priority” and boundaries of California’s Groundwater Basins are being reviewed and updated. (See [www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/pdfs/Engagement%20timeline\\_SGMP%20v02.pdf](http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/sgm/pdfs/Engagement%20timeline_SGMP%20v02.pdf))

The regulations of the SGMA implementation will focus on “medium-” and “high-priority” Basins, as defined by the DWR’s California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) program. (See [www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/casgem/basin\\_prioritization.cfm](http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/casgem/basin_prioritization.cfm)) Basin prioritization was historically predicated on water supply shortages induced by groundwater overdraft in a Basin—with a focus generally limited to groundwater levels, recharge, and yield trends. Now, for the first time, “undesirable results” to surface water resources caused

by groundwater extraction is part of the equation. If surface water impacts are occurring to a park unit's water resources and aquatic habitats because of groundwater extraction and management (or mismanagement), it is incumbent upon park managers to make sure that such information is available to DWR and the managers of groundwater in the affected locale.

SGMA has some statutory exclusions of Groundwater Basins that have been adjudicated—that is, where the terms of various users' activities within a Groundwater Basin have been settled by court decree. However, at this point in the process, it should not be concluded that SGMA's protections and benefits are not available. Basin boundaries are potentially changing; every adjudication is different and typically has limits or requirements for periodic review (including annual reporting); and, there is some ambiguity in the new law that may provide the opportunity to seek and obtain avoidance of "undesirable results" in a respective park unit.

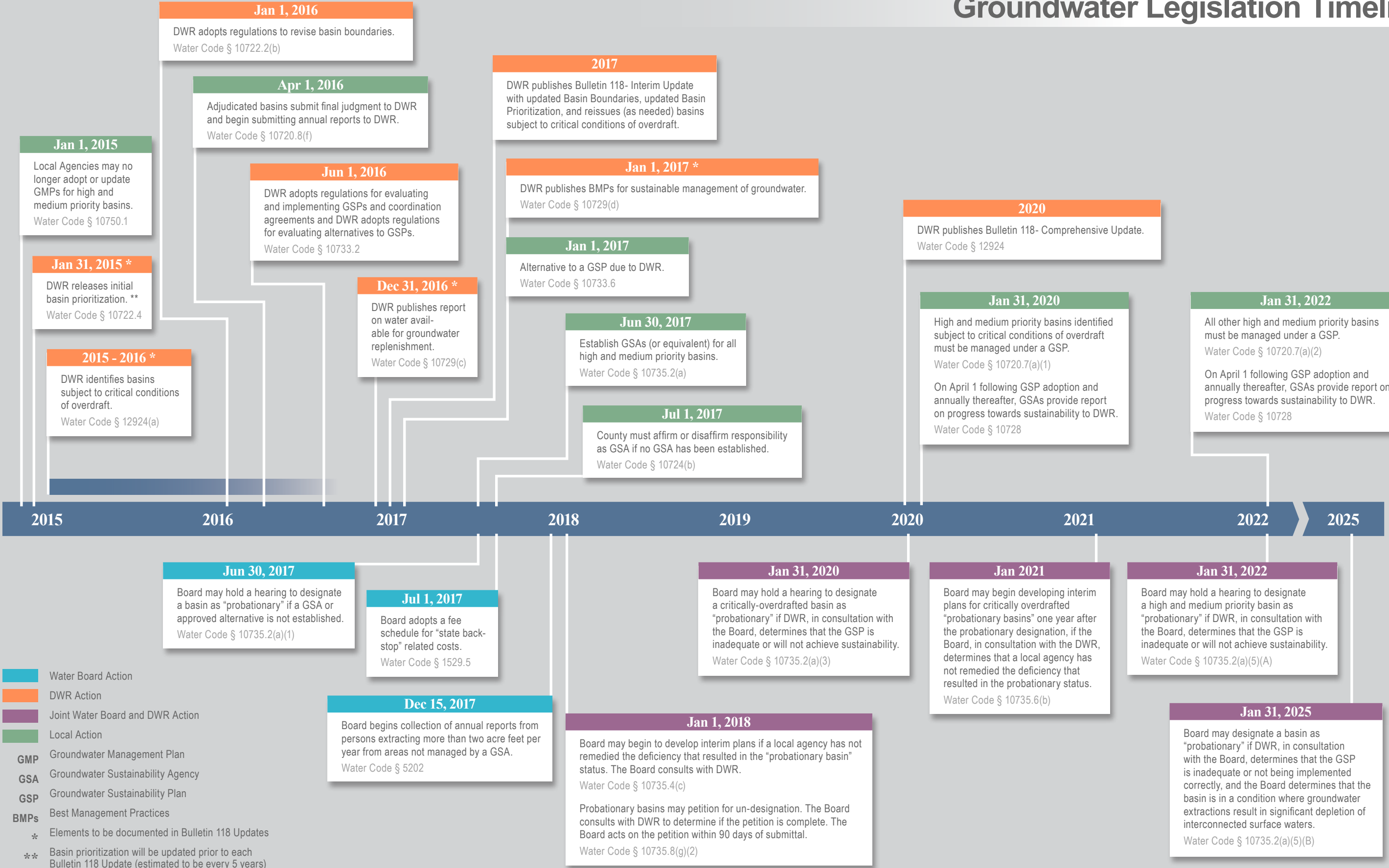
### **Commission Action**

For information only

### **Attachments**

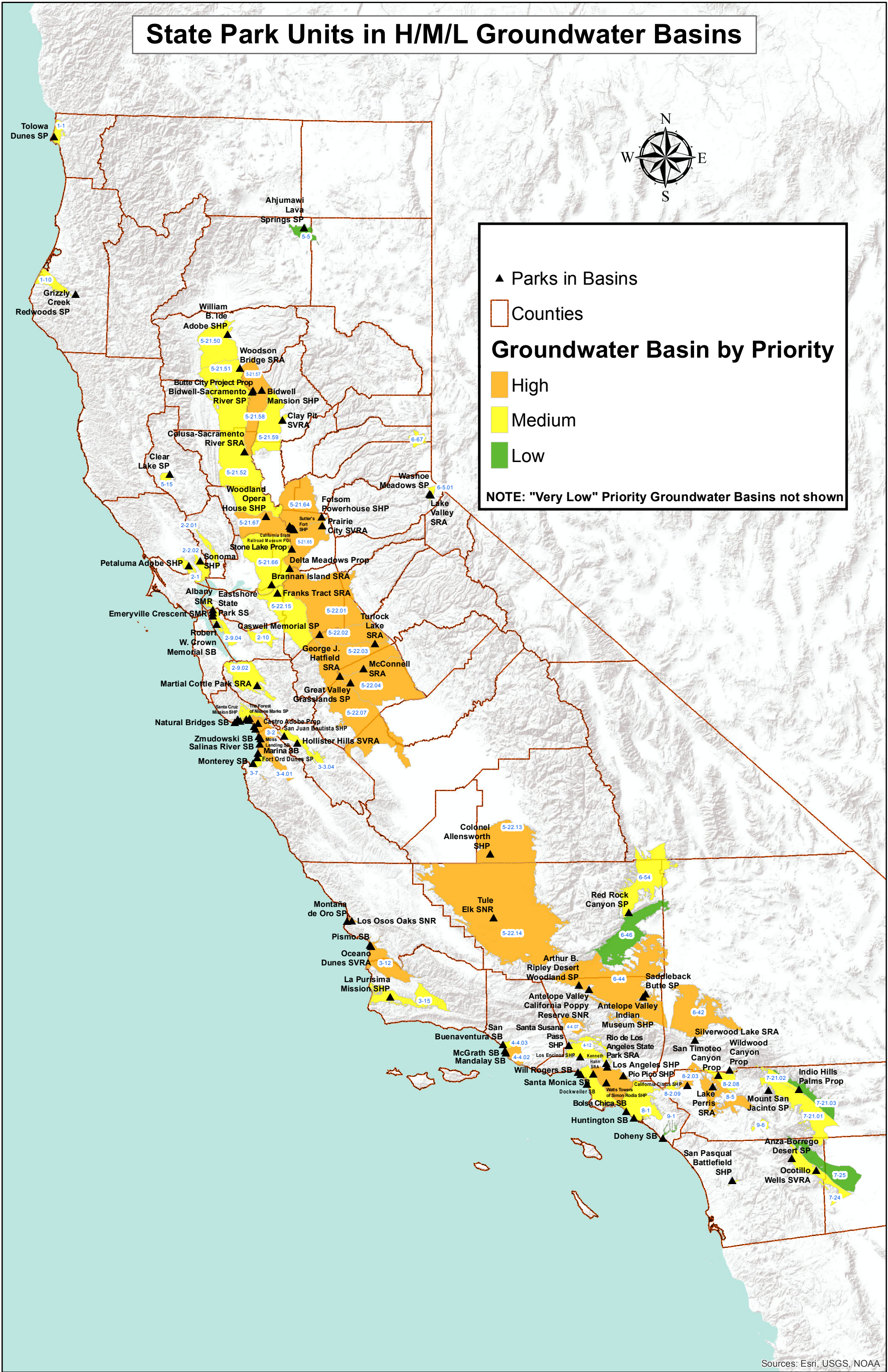
Groundwater Legislation Timeline  
State Park Units in Select Groundwater Basins Map

# Groundwater Legislation Timeline





# State Park Units in H/M/L Groundwater Basins



Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

